

Love, Sex & Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives

By Simon Goldhill

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In *Love, Sex & Tragedy* Simon Goldhill lifts the veil on our inheritance of classical traditions and offers a witty, engrossing survey of the Greek and Roman roots of everything from our overwhelming mania for "hard bodies" to our political systems. Encompassing Karl Marx, Clark Gable, George W. Bush, Oscar Wilde, and Sigmund Freud, Goldhill takes great delight in tracing both follies and fundamental philosophical questions through the centuries and continents to the birthplace of Western civilization as we know it. Underlying his brisk and learned excursions through history and art is the foundational belief, following Cicero, that learning about the classics makes a critical difference to our self-understanding. Whether we are considering the role of religion in contemporary society, our expectations about the boundaries between public and private life, or even how we spend our free time, recognizing the role of the classics is integral to our comprehension of modern life and our place in it.

"Confident, intelligent and assertive; [*Love, Sex & Tragedy*] stands up for 'classics' without apology, without snobbishness and without conservatism."—Oliver Taplin, *Guardian*

"Goldhill . . . takes us through the looking glass into antiquity and shows us some of the sights that he thinks most interesting and informative. . . . Anyone who goes on the journey will be amused, surprised, and enlightened."—Mary K. Lefkowitz, *New York Sun*

"A passionate, witty, and broad-ranging exploration of the ancient foundations of our world. . . . There is a widening gap between our perceptions and the ancient sources. Goldhill closes that gap with this lively and multi-layered challenge to assumptions embedded in modern life."—Lizzie Speller, *Observer*

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Love, Sex & Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives By Simon Goldhill Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #753492 in Books
- Published on: 2005-11-01
- Released on: 2004-10-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .90" w x 6.00" l, 1.04 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 345 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
For Goldhill, the classics are indispensable to an understanding of today's Western culture. Without a knowledge of basic Greek and Roman texts and ideas, our "buried life" and "ancient grounding," the modern citizen is lost—a child forever. Goldhill, a professor of Greek culture and literature at Cambridge, organizes his thesis around five questions: Who do you think you are? Where do you think you are going? What do you think should happen? What do you want to do? Where do you think you came from? Time and again, Goldhill reminds us, the brightest thinkers through the ages have turned to the classics for inspiration. In the New World, the founding fathers were steeped in the intellectual material of Greece and Rome. George Washington found inspiration in the story of the Roman emperor Cincinnatus—a farmer who was called to service, defeated an enemy, then laid down his arms and returned to the farm. Goldhill views Victorian England as the high-water mark of classical influence; some 80% of school time in 19th-century Britain was devoted to the classics. On the dark side of classicism is National Socialism: there, Goldhill argues, the ideas of Plato's Republic (with its emphasis on a perfect social order) played out to a calamitous end. With patient authority and a refreshingly light touch, Goldhill brilliantly illuminates the essential timeliness of these ancient ideas.
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Review

"*Love, Sex & Tragedy* is great, and great fun, the kind of book you find yourself reading out to your other half as you go along-a sparkling, erudite, and amusing remedy for our collective historical amnesia, a book that persuasively argues that without an understanding of our classical roots we are stumbling in the dark, missing vital information about who we really are and why we do the things we do. What do we mean by democracy? Why and how do we mix up history and myth and at what price? Whom do we love and how? Which bodies do we want and why? How do we entertain ourselves, and to distract us from what horrors? Simon Goldhill forces us to examine what we increasingly ignore: our radical reliance on a history we barely know."
(Zadie Smith 2004-06-21)

About the Author

Simon Goldhill, the author or editor of many books, is professor of Greek literature and culture at King's College, Cambridge.

Users Review

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to teach your children, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write to their book. One of them is this Love, Sex & Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives.

Derek Winter:

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Donald Scott:

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